



Theme: Lighting the Way – Paul’s First Letters
“Remaining Faithful in Challenging Times”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber on...
September 11-12, 2021

Scripture: Isaiah 61: 1-4 and 1 Thessalonians 5:5

Weekly Memory Verse:

⁵⁷ But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. –1 Corinthians 15:57

VIDEO Sermon Bumper

SLIDE “Remaining Faithful in Challenging Times”

Throughout this week and weekend many of us have been reminded of the devastation in New York City with images of the World Trade Center, remembering a field that was torn up in Pennsylvania and the Pentagon with a huge hole ripped in one side. We will not forget what we experience and saw 20 years ago on September 11, 2001. This weekend we reflect upon that day 20 years ago and remember those events. We saw the very worst of the human condition which included the most unthinkable things that human beings are capable of doing.

At the very same time, we saw amazing resilience and heroics which showed us the height of human potential for goodness and sacrifice. We

saw people, not thinking of themselves, rushing into buildings to rescue and save strangers and people who would never come out of the building again. We recognize in that moment that we have the potential inside of us for both of these things, tremendous evil and tremendous good. September 11 reminds us to choose the path that Jesus laid out for us when he said these words on the final night of his life in John 15.

BIBLE

¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Most of us know that shortly after 9/11 our country went into Afghanistan and now 20 years later, we have wrestled with what it means to leave that country and is brought up many of the emotions we were feeling then, such as fear and anxiety and a struggle with coping with trauma that feels fresh and new again for many of us. Today, as we begin a new series of sermons on lighting the way and looking at some of the apostle Paul's first letters, I want to focus on how it is we can remain faithful in these challenging times and how our faith can not only be restored but lead to restoration for us.

The truth is that September 11 is not the last tragedy that we will experience. The pandemic is not the last trauma that we will go through which can shake our faith and cause us to ask deep questions. There will be natural disasters and personal tragedies such as the loss of a job or the loss of a marriage or the loss of health. My hope today is that we will learn something from the Scriptures and from those who survived 9/11 about how we cope with tragedy and how it becomes triumph.

Today, we are going to hear from three people who survived 9/11. One is a woman whose fiancé was a firefighter and was killed as he went into the World Trade Center to save others. Another is a man whose

brother was a firefighter and was killed in the World Trade Center and then he worked on rebuilding the memorial at Ground Zero. Another is the young man who was a teenager when his mother was killed in the World Trade Center.

We will hear the transformation that happens in their lives in a documentary by Jim Whitaker. He is a filmmaker who wanted to capture what happened in the aftermath of September 11. In the spring of 2002, he set up 14 cameras at Ground Zero when they were still rubble around and people were sifting through the rubble to find the remains of those who perished. He stayed there for 10 years filming what would happen on that site, and he captured a visual picture of how tragedy is never the final word. He also interviewed those who lost loved ones on 9/11 and some who survived by escaping the building. He interviewed them each year for 10 years and then captured five of their stories in a film that if you have not seen I would recommend to you called, *“Rebirth”*. The film was released 10 years ago and has been rereleased this year as we remember year 20. We see in visual imagery how human beings are not ultimately destroyed by tragedy. This opening clip on want to share with you three of their stories from 2002 when the grief was fresh. We are not going to end here but it’s important to enter into the grief so that we can understand what it means to come out the other side.

VIDEO Rebirth Clip 1

This is what grief looks like in the aftermath of trauma and pain. There is anger and hurt and overwhelming sorrow. In those moments, it feels like tragedy will have the final word. It feels dark and it feels like there is no light and no way out. Yet, that is not the end of the story. There are several simple points to the message today and we find all of these in Scripture. I have shared each of them with you before as your pastor, but very important to remember on this weekend.

SLIDE Tragedy and evil never have the final word.

This might seem like an oxymoron because for the nearly 3000 people who died on September 11 in the airplanes and in the World Trade Center and at the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania, it didn't feel like the final word. Yes, it was horrible, and it was final in terms of this life, but we who follow Jesus look at death differently. We have never seen death as the end or as defeat, but as victory. In the end, we recognize that the tragic was triumphs over because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Some the earliest Christian documents that we have come from the apostle Paul and one of the texts that was critical to those early followers of Jesus who are living in a very dark and difficult time are words that Paul wrote to the people of Corinth. I have read this text often at graveside services and when there has been a tragic, unexpected, and sudden death. Is so important that it is our Scripture memory verse for this week.

BIBLE

⁵⁴ Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power.

BIBLE

⁵⁷ But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's say that last line, our scripture memory verse for this week, together.

There is something more within our bodies which makes us more than just flesh and bone. When this body is destroyed, we have a building, Paul says, not made by human hands but eternal in the heavens. We recognize that we are more than just this shall but there is an eternal presence with whom we are meant to reside. Jesus put it this way in his final discourse to his disciples on the night before he died, the same night when he gave them that new commandment we read earlier and when he talked about there being no love greater than laying down one's life, in John 14.

BIBLE

14 “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

I preached hundreds of funerals in my 30+ years of ministry as a pastor and here's one thing I just know. Every one of us is going to die. We don't know when or how, and sometimes there will be surprises and shocks to our system as we experience death around us. That is a part of life, and it is one common reality for every human, that we all will leave this earth at some time in some way. We must reckon with this as human beings and deal with the question of what will happen to us after we die. We must wrestle with whether we have hope and confidence that this life is not all there is, and we don't need to fear death, because this life is the preface of what God has in store for us.

When we trust in this, that death is not the end, we live life differently and we look at our mortality with a different perspective. I love to drive in my car and go to new places, but I've buried people who have died in their cars. I don't live up for a of that or stop driving because of

that, but I know that's part of the deal if I'm going to get in my car and drive. I used to ride a motorcycle and I knew that people died on them, but I rode it anyway.

I've been riding on airplanes as I was a kid because my father was a pilot, and I still take a number of trips each year. I've been blessed to be able to fly during my life to Africa and Ukraine and Israel and Greece and Alaska and Hawaii and New York and everything in between. Every time I get on a plane and put on my seatbelt, I say a prayer for the pilot and the flight crew and the people in the tower and on the ground. I remember that just like I put on my seatbelt, the Holy Spirit is around me and with me and is something were to happen to the plain, God forbid, I know I belong to God. I'm not afraid to fly because of being on a plane when I was young so often, but after September 11 I realized more than ever that you just don't know what happened at any moment.

The truth is that none of us knows what each day has in store for us when we get in our car or fly on an airplane or walked down the street. For me, every day begins with these words on our shower tag.

**SLIDE Lord, as I enter the water to bathe, I remember my baptism...
Wash me by your grace.
Fill me with your spirit.
And renew my soul.
I pray that I might live as your child today and honor you and
all that I do.**

These words remind me that when I die, it will be a victory and not a defeat, because I belong to God. Those that we love who are left behind, are filled with anguish and grief and that is part of life as well when we have meaningful relationships. The apostle Paul knew that he would be leaving this earth before many of those who were converted to following

Jesus and the church is that he started. He wrote this in 1 Thessalonians 4.

BIBLE

¹³ And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

We grieve with a sense of confidence about what is to come. One thing I've witnessed as a pastor is that when I do a funeral for someone who is a person of faith and who is active in the church community, their children and grandchildren grieve differently. They recognize it's hard to say goodbye and they grieve, and they have sorrow, but they also are able to say things like, "I know mom is with God. I know dad is at peace in the arms of his heavenly Father."

It's quite a bit different when I meet with the family who is not a family of faith they wonder if God's mercy and grace are as big as we talk about in moments like that. They hope things are okay, but there is clearly a difference in how grieving happens in those moments, when we have a confident hope that the worst thing is never the last thing and death does not have the final word. When we believe in the resurrection Christ in his victory over death, there is always hope that can carry us and sustain us in the deepest of grief.

What I've learned is that grief is real, and we cannot ignore it. I also have learned that if we keep moving through that grief, working with the grief group or a counselor or a resource that allows us to feel her feelings, the clouds of grief will one day break. There will be life again after loss. If we will keep putting 1 foot in front of the other, trusting in God and allowing others to support us and encourage us, eventually things begin to shift and change in light begins to come in the darkness again. The clouds

break and we begin to see a bit more joy. One day we find ourselves smiling again, and it might even be a surprise. They eventually come for me carry with us the memory of the person that we lost and love, and at the same time discover new life.

This is how God intended things to be. One of the things I appreciate about the movie *Rebirth*, is that Jim Whitaker gave us a picture of people moving from deep grief to a change that happens these persons that were interviewed. We see it visually represented at the site of Ground Zero as it is transformed. In this clip we see that tragedy never has to have the final word.

VIDEO Rebirth Clip 2

Rebirth, redemption, resurrection are the promises of our faith, and we see it even in that short clip. I was able to visit Ground Zero and the new Memorial as part of our trip the Holy Land in 2015, when we stopped in New York on our way to Tel Aviv. The site had recently opened, and it was a powerful experience and an image of hope.

GRAPHIC World Trade Center Memorial

That idea of hope and remaining faithful and challenging times as a dominant theme in the Scriptures. The most pivotal event in the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament, is something that shaped the entire Bible, including the new Testaments. It happens in 586 BC when the king of Babylon marched with his armies across the Fertile Crescent and descended upon Jerusalem. They laid siege to the city and destroyed the city walls. They raped and murdered more than 1 million people as they pillaged the city and burned it to the ground, including the Temple with people inside. They tore down the palace and destroyed the king's home. They brought his two sons before the king and killed them in front of his eyes. They then gouged out his eyes so the last thing he ever saw was the murder of his children and grandchildren.

Deleting citizens of Jerusalem more than putting chains and led by their blind king, forced to walk back across the Fertile Crescent towards Babylon as exiles in slavery. Jerusalem and Israel were no more. There was no hope. Multiply 9/11 times 1000 and you have a sense of what the people were experiencing in the biblical story of the Old Testament when most of the prophet books were written. And yet, God spoke through those prophets before this even happened, commanding them to tell the people that there is always hope. They were encouraged to trust in God and not give up on their faith. The message was to get up and show up each day, even when it's hard, and eventually the light will come again, and God will deliver you.

Isaiah was one of those prophets and said these words in chapter 61 as he spoke to those in exile and slavery. It's important to remember that these words in this Scripture was the basis of the very first sermon of Jesus in Luke 4. Jesus began his public ministry with these words, knowing they would frame his life and ministry, suffering and death and resurrection.

BIBLE

**1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me,
for the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.**

**He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted
and to proclaim that captives will be released
and prisoners will be freed.**

**² He has sent me to tell those who mourn
that the time of the Lord's favor has come,
and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.**

**³ To all who mourn in Israel,
he will give a crown of beauty for ashes,
a joyous blessing instead of mourning,**

**festive praise instead of despair.
In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks
that the Lord has planted for his own glory.**

**⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins,
repairing cities destroyed long ago.
They will revive them,
though they have been deserted for many generations.**

People held onto this promise and 50 years later the king of Persia conquered the Babylonian empire. You can read about this in the book of Esther as that king said to the Jews they could return to their home in Jerusalem. The children who were taken into exile 50 years earlier were now parents and grandparents and took their families back, returning with singing to Zion. They rebuilt the ancient city just as had been promised.

They had no hope when they were taken into exile and made slaves, but God was clear in saying to them that tragedy and evil and destruction and death will never have the final word. We find this image throughout Scripture, like from the prophet Ezekiel who was preaching and speaking while the Israelites were in that exile in Babylon. You may have heard these words before because they have been used in song and poetry for thousands of years, from Ezekiel 37.

BIBLE

1 The Lord took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley filled with bones. ² He led me all around among the bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. ³ Then he asked me, “Son of man, can these bones become living people again?”

“O Sovereign Lord,” I replied, “you alone know the answer to that.”

⁴ Then he said to me, “Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, ‘Dry bones, listen to the word of the Lord! ⁵ This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! ⁶ I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”

⁷ So I spoke this message, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as complete skeletons.

Just as many of us scratch our heads on 9/11, important to notice that Ezekiel recognized that only God if life could come from death. God is the one who reminds us that there is always hope and that tragedy never has the final word. In the end, good will triumph over evil; love over hate; and life over death. The cross was the ultimate symbol of torture and pain and yet God, in Jesus Christ, went to the cross to let us know that people and death will never have the final word. God took the cross and molded it and shaped it into a symbol of grace and freedom.

SLIDE God always forces evil to accomplish good.

God doesn't cause the evil or force people to do these horrible things, flying airplanes into buildings. This is the farthest thing from God's will for humanity, yet God gives us freedom. With that freedom comes the awesome potential to do great good and also the terrifying possibility of doing evil. This is what we saw at work on 9/11. Evil does not have the final word and God will take that evil and mold it and shape it and bring about something beautiful.

On another September day in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, children had gone to Sunday school when a man motivated by hate planted a bomb outside of their classroom and detonated it while there

were children inside. You know the story and that for children died in that blast and many others were harmed. Dr. Martin Luther King was preaching the funeral of three of them when he said these words.

God still has a way of bringing good out of evil. History has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive. The innocent blood of these little girls may well serve as a redemptive force which will bring new light to this dark city.

That did happen because Birmingham was changed. When the city sought pictures of these small girls who had died during this horrible crime forced those who had been quiet before to raise their voices. They began to speak out in unison and say, "This is not right. We will not tolerate this hate anymore." God forced that evil to accomplish good and it is how God worked in the aftermath of 9/11.

You remember that after 9/11 there was a sense of national unity and we stop hating each other because of our political parties for brief time. We were no longer Fox news or CNN, deep South or Northeast, liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat. We were just Americans and family trying to survive and cope with grief. There's something beautiful about that which lasted maybe six months and then was gone. I've been praying on this 20th remembrance of 9/11 we might reclaim that even if it was for a day or two.

Of course, we have disagreements, and we see things differently, but we are Americans together. We are people and human beings throughout the world. Can we love each other and disagree? In our disagreements can we still show love for each other? Can we stack hands together and recognize that we agree on far more than we recognize and probably more than we disagree? Can we stop painting each other as enemies and calling each other names?

September 11 had an impact around the world that most of us

Americans didn't see because we were overwhelmed by her own grief. Almost every nation was in America's corner after that event if you remember. They were talking about the beautiful things that we do as a nation. The Muslim and Arab nations reach out with compassion and there were positive changes in many other nations because of what happened here. I didn't know, and you may not know, that there were several Imams in Saudi Arabia that were no longer allowed to preach because they had been preaching hate and several of the bombers had gone to their schools. There were a thousand teachers no longer allowed to teach because of the hate they had been preaching and 400 of them were arrested because their extreme views were causing hatred to spew forth from those communities. I didn't know that.

I didn't know the King of Saudi Arabia had called together a collection of Jews, Christians, and Muslims talk about how to learn from each other and make sure this didn't happen again. That would've been unthinkable prior to 9/11 and yet it began to happen. While we still have a long way to go, we still can see God at work even in the most horrible of tragedies. The King of Jordan called together a conference of 120 prominent Muslims from around the world to meet in his country and agreed to make a commitment not to allow this sort of things to fester and build in their communities because it was not who they were or who they felt God called them to be. They wanted to be sure their picture of Islam, which did not believe in killing innocent people, was one that was shared with the world in hopes of overcoming hatred and division.

They also reach out to Christian leaders and said, "How can we show the world what it can be and what we can be as we live together?" They agreed publicly that they shared in common with Christians the two most important commandments. Loving God with all our heart and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves is what matters most and they committed to do that together. I didn't know that, but I experienced it when I visited

with Arabs and Muslims in Israel and Jordan on my visit to the holy land after 9/11.

GRAPHIC 9-11 Memorial

I pray that today, and again 10 years and 20 years in 30 years, people can gather at this Memorial and look back and say, “50 years ago, the world was changed. Radical extremism in any religion was no longer allowed to percolate underneath the surface. Instead, people began to say that this could never happen again, and they began to work towards that because what happened on 9/11.”

I believe God forces evil to accomplish good, which is what the apostle Paul was writing about I believe in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8.

BIBLE

²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. ²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Sometimes in our grief, we don't know what to pray for or how to express ourselves, and we rely on the Holy Spirit to fill us and change us and shape us even in the midst of our heart ache. God knows our needs and longs for us to be in harmony with God's will and we do that by recognizing that God works together, through everything that we look at and name evil, to bring about something good and beautiful. Paul goes on in Romans 12 to say these words.

BIBLE

²¹ Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

SLIDE God calls us to overcome evil with good.

We are meant to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world, entering into the most painful moments to bring the light of Christ which brings hope. I have shared with you the story before of Pastor in Pakistan who serves in a region where 95% of the population are Muslim and some are extremists who have done things to harm his congregation and other innocent people. He was asked how he responded to that, and he said:

How else do you respond? We love them. We love them and our hope is that our love may shame them into a place where they question why they do what they do. Our hope is that our love might transform them, so they would begin to say, "I want to follow that Jesus they are talking about the way they are following Jesus because I have seen loved live that out in their lives." We will overcome evil with good.

The kind of love which overcomes evil with good looks like the firefighters and police officers and port authority officials and first responders who rushed into the buildings without thinking of their own lives. I remember reading the story about a blind man who was coming down the stairs in the World Trade Center after the planes had struck and rescuers were rushing past him. They would each stop and ask if he was okay, seeing he was blind, and when he assured them, he was okay and could make it out, they continued up the stairs. Later he realized none of them would make it out of the building and he wished he would've asked for help from one of them, so we could've saved at least that person.

God calls each of us to overcome evil with good, and we can do that in our daily lives as well by taking a small step. Maybe you can do that by reaching out to a neighbor who you haven't seen for a while because of the pandemic. Just check in on them and see how it is God might use that

connection. Maybe you can sit down with someone who you know disagrees with you on politics or vaccines or masks and simply have a conversation where you listen and try to understand, building a bridge in the midst of tense times. You might simply commit to not posting anything on social media that might be divisive or contentious or add to the national climate of fear.

GRAPHIC Compassion International

You might commit to connecting with one of our families on the Navajo nation as part of Native Hope if you haven't done so already. You might commit to sponsoring a child through Compassion International, which is where you connect with the child in the developing nation, and we offer you the opportunity every Spring, but you can do that at any time from their website. Because of Covid, there are many more children in need of sponsors right now. Our family sponsored a child until they aged out and now are able to do life on their own. We now have another child that we sponsor, and it costs about \$40 a month. While we can't change the entire world, for those two children, we do change their world.

Each of these children on the picture are just waiting for someone to sponsor them so they can continue to go to school and have meals and be able to learn and grow and change the cycle of poverty in their community. We overcome evil with good by showing people where Christian faith looks like in countries all over the world.

GRAPHIC Robert Zampieri Junior

Robert Zampieri Junior was killed in the World Trade Center on 9/11 when he was 30 years old. He worked as a commodities trader on the 92nd floor of Tower number two. His father, Rober Zampieri, is a dentist in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

GRAPHIC Robert Zampieri

After his son's death, Robert the father said: ***You have a cavernous hole after something like this happens. You can either fill it with hate or you can fill it with love. I choose to fill the hole with love.***

He is wife started a scholarship fund at St. Anthony High School so kids who could not afford to go to this private school would have an option to attend. He puts together a golf team and every year and finds sponsors, raising over \$2 million to support students who could never afford to escape the cycle of poverty to attend a school that could lead to an even better education. He did all this is a response to his son's death and talks openly about how God has called him to overcome the evil his family has experienced with good.

GRAPHIC Jonathan Ielpi Junior

GRAPHIC Jonathan Ielpi Firefighter Outfit at Memorial

Jonathan Ielpi was a firefighter who followed in his dad's footsteps, serving with Squad 288 out of Queens, New York on 9/11. Jonathan called his dad moments after he was called to the World Trade Center to let him know he was on his way to that site. His dad begged him to be careful and that was the last conversation they had. Jonathan's firefighter suit is now in the 9/11 memorial tribute center.

GRAPHIC Lee Ielpi

When Lee Ielpi, Jonathan's father, was interviewed recently he said these words: ***It's easy to hate, but I don't understand what we are going to get from hating. I understand justice. I understand the need to get justice, but I do understand what hating is all about in these moments.***

Lee Ielpi left retirement and went back to work full-time as a firefighter with no compensation, working in the rubble of 9/11 to help find the remains of those who had died to help bring closure to families.

After that, he started an organization for September 11 survivors so they could gather and help each other to find healing. He then started the first visitor center at the World Trade Center before there was an official visitor center. He began training those who lost loved ones in 9/11 to take people on tours and help them understand what was happening as the memorial was being built. He continues to help with that visitor center and said this about that experience.

GRAPHIC Lee Ielpi at Visitor's Center

Here's what we want. We want people to leave this site with the positive and not a negative. The idea that I can make tomorrow a little bit better than yesterday is what fuels me when I get up each morning and serve at this site were my son gave his life. This is an image from just a few days ago when he visited the 9/11 memorial to remember his son.

GRAPHIC Jonathan Lee Ielpi at Memorial

I see this from people in our own congregation, who out of their pain and suffering find ways to bring about good from that difficult moment. They're willing to say, "God, please take this and use it somehow." Every one of our Care Ministers, who come to visit you in the hospital or write you a note or serves in many other ways 5 to 10 hours a week, our people who have experienced pain somewhere in the past and are inviting God to use that. When we are able to do that, it brings about healing in our own lives. We become what the great author and spiritual writer and pastor Henry Nouwen calls, "The Wounded Healer." He wrote an entire book on this idea the spiritual truth behind the words. It is still one of my favorite all-time books.

GRAPHIC The Wounded Healer

Nouwen writes these words.

When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains,

but that we can mobilize them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope.

Nobody escapes being wounded. We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not, "How can we hide our wounds?" so we don't have to be embarrassed, but "How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?" When our wounds cease to be a source of shame and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers.

We invite God to bring beauty from our ashes, which is the last thing I leave you with today from the text of Isaiah.

SLIDE God will bring something beautiful from the ashes.

God is able, and God uses us, to bring beauty from ashes. Our scripture passage reminds us that God will bring beauty from ashes, joyous from sorrow, a heart of praise for spirit of heaviness, that we might become oaks of righteousness, and the world might be different. Tragedies will happen in our lives and our world. Those who want to do evil will continually find ways to do evil. We remember today that God's promise is not that horrible things won't happen, but that God will be with us at every moment, even the horrible ones, and bring something beautiful from the ashes of our lives.

We believe that evil never has the final word and God will force evil to accomplish good. We are called to overcome evil with good and God is able to bring beauty from ashes. That is what we hear from the close of the film ***Rebirth***. You can sense it and see it visually. Let's look and listen.

VIDEO Rebirth Clip 3

Rebirth, redemption, resurrection, and hope. We are meant to be people who bring these to the world and it's why the apostle Paul wrote

these words to the people of Thessalonica some 2000 years ago. This is the theme verse for our series of sermons on lighting the way. Let's say these words together.

BIBLE

⁵ For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.

Let's pray together.

SLIDE Prayer

God, how grateful we are for the hope we have in you, that tragedy never has to have the final word. We pray that you might help us to remember in the face of our own tragedies that you are able to take the worst moments and bring about something good. In those worst experiences, where we feel pain and hurt and feel like lashing out in anger, help us oh God, to overcome evil with good. May we be part of your work in this world to bring beauty from ashes. Bless each person who worships with us today, and all who mourn and grieve. Give us hope in Jesus' name. Amen

September 11-12 Order

1. Ely Welcomes people and says, **“Today, as we remember 9-11 some twenty years later, we are going to talk about how we can find faith in challenging times.”**
2. One Song, followed by prayer
3. Welcome and invite people to wave and be seated.
4. Announcements by Jeff (Check News Section on Website)
 - Grief Group
 - Summit Students Kick Off Sunday night
5. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
6. Video bumper plays.
7. Sermon
8. Prayer after sermon
9. 2 Songs of Worship
10. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
11. Offering SLIDE and Focus
12. Meditation Moments reminder by Jeff
13. Care Ministers (If any are present)
14. Closing Prayer